



NEWS RELEASE

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BUYER, FOWLER, HARMAN RELEASE REPORT ON SEXUAL MISCONDUCT INVESTIGATION

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Washington, D.C. — Rep. Tillie Fowler (R-FL), Rep. Steve Buyer (R-IN), and Rep. Jane Harman (D-CA), who were appointed by the chairman and ranking member of the House National Security Committee to lead the committee's oversight efforts regarding sexual misconduct in the military services, today released an interim report on their findings thus far.

"This is by no means the end of our oversight activities," Fowler said, "but we have already made significant progress and discovered a number of interesting facts. I want to stress that this has been a bipartisan investigation and that we have tried very hard not to bring any preconceived ideas into the mix. All three of us are lawyers, so we have also been very sensitive not to interfere with the ongoing legal investigations in various cases."

"The one aspect of this situation that has struck me most forcibly," said Fowler, "is the way that drill sergeants are chosen and trained. When I asked the first focus group of drill sergeants what made them decide to become drill sergeants, the whole room broke up laughing. Almost without exception, they said that they had been working in some other capacity and were simply notified that they had been chosen to attend drill sergeant school. One young man told me he had planned to make a career in armor. He was literally working on his tank when someone handed him the envelope with his orders."

"Then I learned that there was no psychological testing done on the drill sergeant trainees unless they actually requested to become drill sergeants. It seems to me that if you are going to put someone in a position of almost absolute authority over a group of impressionable young recruits, you need to at least try to ascertain how they will respond to having that kind of power. I'm sure that there are plenty of individuals in all the services who make great soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines but would not make great drill sergeants. A better selection process would help to make that distinction and would probably save some careers along the way."

"The other thing we have seen that can't be emphasized enough is how very complex this subject is," the Congresswoman continued. "Although there have clearly been some terrible abuses of authority, most of the drill sergeants and other personnel out there are trying very hard to do their jobs and treat other people with

respect. I had one drill sergeant tell me, with great emotion, that he was married, was a committed Christian, and would never think of sexually harassing anyone — but that he prayed every day that none of the trainees under his command would misconstrue something he did or said, and he lived in fear of being accused of improper behavior. We have also heard from groups of drill sergeants that they feel they are considered guilty until proven innocent if someone brings a complaint against them, and that they have no support system. We have been very concerned by reports that the military criminal investigative services have used inappropriate and coercive tactics in investigating reports of sexual misconduct. We have tried to make it very clear that — although it is important to take nothing for granted and to thoroughly investigate any allegations — this is not a witch-hunt.”

“Several provisions we included in the FY ’98 Defense Authorization bill will address the concerns we have developed. One provision will establish a Congressional panel tasked with determining whether the services’ basic training programs are structured to produce graduates who are ready to meet the challenges they must be prepared to meet. Another provision requires that the Secretary of the Army institute psychological testing of all drill sergeant candidates; to provide drill sergeant trainees with the opportunity to get some practice before they actually begin serving as drill sergeants; and to provide a mechanism for soldiers who are found to be unsuited for the work of a drill sergeant to be reassigned without damage to their careers. The third provision will provide for a study of the practices and policies of the military’s criminal investigative services when it comes to investigating sex crimes. The final provision will direct the Secretary of Defense to undertake reforms to improve the quality of recruits entering the services.”

“The bottom line here, as far as I am concerned, is making sure that our military personnel remain the best-trained and best-qualified in the world. In order for that to happen, we must ensure that the training policies and procedures that are in place work for the good of everyone involved. The whole reason we have a military in the first place is to defend our shores and our national security interests around the world, and if our recruiting and training policies are not giving us the force that we need, they need to be changed. I look forward to our upcoming site visits, and I’m sure that we will learn even more as the investigation continues.”